

# Hurricane and Tropical Storm FAQs

## BUSINESSES

### **I am a business owner, what should I be doing?**

All businesses should consider protecting important assets such as files, documents, equipment and any other items necessary to reopen your business following a disaster. In addition, all businesses should ensure that their employees and families have undertaken disaster preparedness actions at home so that they can return to work as soon as it is safe to do so.

### **I am an employee, what should I be doing?**

Contact your employer and ask if there are any specific preparedness actions that your company or business may require. In addition you should ensure that your family and home are prepared for the emergency. This includes preparing a disaster supply kit which includes a minimum of seven days' worth of non-perishable food, water, clothing, prescription medications, flashlight, portable radio and other important items. If your family is disaster prepared at home then you will be better able to return to work following an emergency. **(See the section on Preparedness should the caller have specific questions)**

### **When will help be available if my business is damaged?**

County, State and Federal assistance for businesses is generally available sometime following the disaster. Listen to TV and radio for updates on disaster relief assistance.

## CLOSURES

### **Will my child's school be closed?**

The decision to close public schools will be made by the Hawaii State Department of Education. Monitor TV and radio for updates on school closures.

### **Will the airport be closed?**

The decision to close airports will be made by the Hawaii State Department of Transportation. Monitor TV and radio for updates on airport closures.

### **What roads or highways are closed?**

Unfortunately during a storm event it is very difficult to know immediately which roads are open or closed. Police forward road closure information to local media as quickly as possible. Listen to TV and radio for the most current updates. In addition, we highly recommend signing up to receive emergency email and push alert messages sent directly to your cell phone from the City's Mobile App, HNL.Info. This free mobile app is available to download from iTunes App Store and Google Play. Online web based version at <https://hnl.info/alerts>.

## **ACCESS AND FUNCTIONAL NEEDS**

### **I am disabled or have a family member who is disabled, where can I go?**

Special Health Needs Shelters have been developed to assist those with access and/or functional needs. Locations of Special Health Needs Shelters will be broadcast over TV and radio. Special Health Needs Shelters are for those individuals who do not require hospitalization, but who's medical or health needs require more attention than is available in a general population shelter. Facilities designated to serve as Special Health Needs Shelters provide limited support to persons with special health needs. Special health needs evacuees must either be capable of taking care of their own needs or be accompanied by a caregiver. Special Health Needs Shelters may be supported by generator power should there be an island-wide power outage.

### **I am disabled, should I evacuate to a hospital?**

Unless you have a medical emergency, hospitals will not allow you to shelter there. Special Health Needs Shelters have been developed to assist those with disabilities. Locations of Special Health Needs Shelters will be broadcast over TV and radio. If you need emergency assistance to evacuate your home call 9-1-1. Be aware that during an island-wide emergency assistance from Police, Fire and Emergency Medical Services could be delayed or in some cases, unavailable. You should seek the help of family, friends and neighbors to assist you with your evacuation, sheltering or disaster assistance needs.

### **I know a disabled person who cannot understand emergency information broadcast over TV and radio.**

If you know a friend or family member who due to a disability cannot receive emergency information readily, we highly recommend forming a core group of family or friends who can assist with translations or providing important emergency information as well as assisting with disaster preparedness actions and if needed, evacuation. In addition, we highly recommend signing up to receive emergency email and push alert messages sent directly to your cell phone from the City's Mobile App, HNL.Info. This free mobile app is available to download from iTunes App Store and Google Play. Online web based version at <https://hnl.info/alerts>.

### **Will emergency hurricane shelters have medical equipment/supplies to help people needing oxygen, dialysis or other medical health needs?**

No, shelters do not provide life-sustaining services. Each person who requires life-sustaining services need to work out an agreement with the companies that provide these services such as oxygen providers. The City provides emergency access cards to all companies that provide life-sustaining equipment / services such as oxygen so they can get through roadblocks to deliver such services before a hurricane or storm.

**Will emergency hurricane shelters have medical equipment/supplies to help people needing oxygen, dialysis or other medical health needs? Cont'd.**

For dialysis services, the City has been working with the service providers to get some details on their operations. Here are some of their recommendations:

1. Dialysis patients have several days between services; if a hurricane is approaching they can go on a special diet to lengthen that period. It is recommended that patients speak to their doctor in advance to discuss their various options during a disaster.
2. Dialysis requires power and lots of distilled water; patients should check with their provider if they have an emergency plan which would allow them to operate after a disaster, such as having an emergency generator, fuel and water.
3. If providers are unable to provide services after a disaster, the City may turn to FEMA who can assist in temporarily relocating people from affected areas; patients would return when services such as oxygen delivery and dialysis are restored.

**DISASTER RELIEF**

**When will help be available if my home is damaged or destroyed?**

Due to our large population, post disaster relief assistance could take as long as a week to reach everyone on Oahu needing help. Evacuation shelters will remain open as long as there is a need.

Disaster Assistance and Recovery Centers (DARCs) will open in affected communities following a major disaster. At DARCs residents can access disaster relief resources of City, State, Federal and non-government agencies all in one place.

Listen to TV and radio for updates on post disaster relief assistance, shelter updates and opening schedules for DARCs.

**EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE**

**I have an emergency, what do I do?**

Call 9-1-1.

**If I need emergency assistance to evacuate what do I do?**

If you need emergency assistance to evacuate your home call 9-1-1. Be aware that during an island-wide emergency many people on Oahu will be calling for assistance from Police, Fire and Emergency Medical Services. Emergency assistance could be delayed or in some cases, unavailable especially if streets or highways are impassable. You should seek the assistance of friends or family members to help you with your evacuation, sheltering or disaster assistance needs.

## **EVACUATION**

### **Should I consider evacuating?**

You should evacuate immediately when advised by authorities or you feel that your home or location is no longer safe. Ultimately, the decision to evacuate is your own, but the protection of you and your family should be the most important consideration.

### **Do you live on or near the shoreline?**

Yes. Be aware that if you live on the shoreline or near the ocean you may have to evacuate due to the hazard of hurricane produced storm surge. Review coastal evacuation maps in your telephone book white pages or visit our web site at [www.honolulu.gov/dem](http://www.honolulu.gov/dem) and follow the instructions on the *Tsunami Map Viewer* to quickly see if you are in a tsunami/hurricane evacuation zone.

### **Do you live in an older home?**

Yes. If you live in an older home (constructed prior to 1995) or an older home on an exposed ridgeline you may have to evacuate. Older homes are not built to current hurricane construction standards and could be at risk from wind damage. Homes on exposed ridgelines are extremely susceptible to these hazards.

### **Do you live in a flood prone area?**

Yes. If you live in an area prone to flooding you should consider evacuating. Hurricanes and Tropical Storms bring intense amounts of rain that can quickly flood low lying areas causing flash flooding of streams and rivers.

### **Do you live in a newly built home or concrete and steel reinforced building located out of the coastal evacuation or flood zones?**

If yes, you can and should consider sheltering in place in a Safe Room. A Safe Room is a secured room within your home or business with few or no windows. Bathrooms, large walk in closets and enclosed hallways are ideal. You want to place as much protection between yourself and the hazards outside your walls. Bring in pets, close and seal all doors and window coverings. Move your family, disaster supplies and pets into your Safe Room. Be sure to take a battery operated radio, flashlight and spare batteries with you. Remain in your Safe Room until the all clear is issued over TV and radio. There will be no siren sounding for an all clear.

### **When should I evacuate?**

Evacuate immediately when directed by emergency officials. Evacuation notifications will be broadcast over TV and radio in conjunction with activation of our island-wide Outdoor Warning Siren system. Police, Fire, and Emergency Management officials will also use mobile public address systems to alert residents in Oahu neighborhoods. Plan to complete evacuation before the arrival of sustained 40 MPH winds. Evacuating in winds exceeding the sustained 40 MPH level may be more hazardous than remaining where you are.

**Where should I go if I evacuate?**

Go to the homes of friends or relatives whose residence are not endangered, to facilities provided by your employer or church group, or to a public shelter. Please note that shelters will not be opened automatically. Monitor radio and TV for specific shelter locations and opening schedules.

Be aware that steel reinforced concrete buildings should provide adequate protection. If your building is more than six stories tall and is located in the coastal evacuation zone seek safety by moving to the third floor or higher. Search out enclosed rooms, hallways, or stairwells that have load-bearing walls. Such areas offer protection as good as public shelters.

**I do not drive or have a car, how do I evacuate to a shelter?**

On Oahu, City buses may be used as evacuation shuttles providing free transportation to the nearest shelter once evacuations are ordered. These will display a special "Evacuation" sign and will pick you up free anywhere along their route. Just flag down an evacuation shuttle and get on board.

Riders will be allowed one bag per person. Domestic pets may also be brought onboard the bus as long as they are on a leash or in a solid sided or cage type carrier.

When evacuation buses are made available routes and other information will be broadcast over TV and radio.

Request the assistance of family, friends or neighbors to get you to an evacuation shelter site.

**INFORMATION****How can I get current emergency information?**

TV and radio remain your best means of receiving current emergency information. Make sure that you have a battery operated radio and spare batteries at home and at work. A hand crank radio is a good option too.

In addition, we highly recommend signing up to receive emergency email and push alert messages sent directly to your cell phone from the City's Mobile App, HNL.Info. This free mobile app is available to download from iTunes App Store and Google Play. Online web based version at <https://hnl.info/alerts>.

**Which radio stations should I monitor?**

KSSK AM 590, KSSK FM 92.3 and KNDI AM 1270 are your best choices. These radio stations have generator power and will continue broadcasting emergency information.

**NOAA Weather Alert Radio**

NOAA Weather Alert Radios can notify you 24 hours a day to hazards in our area including severe weather, hurricanes and tropical storms and tsunami events. In addition many of these units can activate other warning devices such as a strobe light to provide a visual warning. These radios are available from Oahu electronics and department stores.

## **NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING**

### **I know a Non-English speaker who cannot understand emergency information broadcast over TV and radio.**

If you have a family member who does not speak English or has limited English proficiency and cannot receive emergency information readily, we highly recommend you visit our website [www.honolulu.gov/dem](http://www.honolulu.gov/dem) to review online or download Resources in other Languages. Also consider forming a core group of family or friends who can assist with translations or providing important emergency information as well as assisting with disaster preparedness actions and if needed, evacuation.

The following radio stations broadcast in foreign languages:

#### **FILIPINO KPHI Radio AM 1130**

Broadcasts in Filipino.

#### **JAPANESE KZOO Radio AM 1210**

Broadcasts in Japanese.

#### **KOREAN KHRA Radio AM 1460**

Broadcasts in Korean

#### **MULTI-LINGUAL KNDI Radio AM 1270**

Broadcasts in Filipino, Samoan, Tongan, Hispanic, Chinese, Okinawan, Vietnamese, Laotian, Marshallese, Pohnpeian and Chuukese.

## **PETS**

### **I am a pet owner, what can I do?**

Be aware that general population shelters do not allow pets. Pet Friendly Shelters have been developed and those locations will be broadcast over TV and radio. Owners are responsible for feeding, cleaning, and exercising their pets and may be asked to assist shelter staff. Each pet must be brought to the shelter in their own pet cage or solid sided carrier with enough room that they can comfortably turn around inside. Pet owners must provide food, water, sanitation supplies and other pet care provisions for each pet.

## GENERAL PREPAREDNESS

### **How can I get current weather information?**

Call the National Weather Service at **808-973-4380** for recorded weather information or visit their website at **<http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/>**. If time permits consider purchasing a NOAA weather alert radio.

### **Fourteen (14)-day Disaster Supply Kit**

With Hawaii's remoteness it could be as long as a week before a full disaster relief operation can be initiated. Hawaii residents need to be prepared to take care of all of their emergency needs and those of their family for at least seven days following a major island or state-wide disaster. Your disaster supplies kit should contain enough of the following items to last for a minimum of 14-days:

**Water** - One gallon of water per person per day for drinking

**Food** - Non-perishable food that does not require cooking such as peanut butter, protein/nutrient bars / shakes and/or dried fruits/nuts. Popular local foods such as spam, corned beef and vienna sausages are great comfort foods but contain high sodium and may be heavy to carry should you need evacuate

**Eating Utensils** – Plates, mess kits, forks and chop sticks. Don't forget a non-electric can opener for canned foods

**Radio** – NOAA Weather Radio or AM/FM Radio (battery, hand-crank or solar)

**Light** - Flashlight (battery, hand-crank or solar) and or portable fluorescent lights

**Spare batteries** - Check annually

**First Aid** – Get a good kit with non-latex gloves and consider enrolling in a certified first aid, CPR and AED course

**Whistle** – Important for signaling for help. A whistle carries much farther than the human voice and uses less energy than yelling

**Dust Mask** – Helps to filter contaminated air

**Sanitation** - Moist towelettes, toilet paper, 5-gallon bucket, heavy duty garbage bags, baking soda or kitty litter to absorb odors and plastic ties for personal sanitation

**Personal Toiletry** – Baby wipes, mouth wash, tooth paste/brush, deodorant, body powder, feminine products, incontinent supplies

**Tools** - Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities, duct tape

**Important Document** - Picture ID, Medical Records, Insurance and Bank Records, Certificates (i.e. Birth, Marriage, Divorce), Wills and Healthcare Directives, Family Photos, Local area maps

**Medication and Prescription** – Special medications, spare glasses, hearing aid batteries, listing of all prescriptions and medical device serial numbers

**Baby and Children** - Infant formula, diapers, kid friendly snacks, toys and games that do not require power or batteries

**Pet Supplies** - Pet food, water, leak proof crate, leash, medications, and toy

### **How do I prepare for high winds?**

- Trim dead wood and weak/overhanging branches from all trees.
- Certain trees and bushes are vulnerable to high winds and any dead tree near a home can become a hazard.
- Secure lawn furniture, trash cans and other unsecured outside objects that could become projectiles in high winds.
- Detached carports and open garages are at risk from high wind damage.
- Have flashlights, battery operated radio and spare batteries on-hand in case of a power outage.
- Drivers of large trucks and SUV's should be prepared for sudden gusts of wind which could cause momentary loss of vehicle control.
- Listen to TV and radio for safety instructions from the Department of Emergency Management and the National Weather Service.
- Should you have a high wind related emergency call 9-1-1 immediately.

### **What do I need to do before a hurricane or tropical storm strikes?**

- Have major electronics unplugged or plugged in a surge protector strips.
- Backup important electronic files onto an external drive or cloud regularly.
- Keep your family together if possible and minimize travel until the storm system is no longer a threat.
- Make plans to secure your property. Permanent storm shutters offer the best protection for windows. A second option is to board up windows with 5/8" marine plywood, cut to fit and ready to install. Tape does not prevent windows from breaking.
- Be sure trees and shrubs around your home are well trimmed.
- Remove and safely store any items outdoors such a lawn furniture that could become airborne.
- Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts.
- Determine how and where to secure your boat if you own one.
- Consider building or identifying a safe room in your home.
- Do not leave your windows open at all.

### **Should I tape my windows?**

Masking tape or duct tape on your windows **will not stop** storm driven debris from breaking the glass. The only reliable method for securing your windows from damage is to shield them from the outside with plywood (minimum 5/8" thick), window shutters or other window protection systems.

### **Should I open my windows to keep the air pressure from damaging my home?**

Definitely not. This is an old urban legend that **will not** protect your home during a hurricane or tropical storm. Keeping all of your windows closed and secured is the only way to prevent storm winds and rains from entering the structure and causing damage or catastrophic failure.



### **How can I get emergency information?**

Official emergency information such as evacuation notification and shelter locations will be broadcast over **all** TV and radio stations Statewide using the Emergency Alert System or EAS. During an emergency such as a hurricane you must make sure that your home has a battery operated radio and spare batteries on hand to receive emergency information. Newer hand-crank generator radios or solar powered radios are also a good option. EAS broadcasts for major coastal evacuations will be aired in conjunction with a three-minute sounding of all Outdoor Warning Siren Systems on Oahu.

In addition, we highly recommend signing up to receive emergency email and push alert messages sent directly to your cell phone from the City's Mobile App, HNL.Info. This free mobile app is available to download from iTunes App Store and Google Play. Online web based version at <https://hnl.info/alerts>.

### **Disaster Preparedness, what should I know?**

Due to Hawaii's isolation and our large resident, military and visitor population it could be many days before disaster relief efforts reach all of those who are affected. Individuals, families and businesses should be prepared to be on their own for at least seven days. Assemble basic supplies such as non-perishable food, water, clothing and important medications. Go to the DEM website at [www.honolulu.gov/dem](http://www.honolulu.gov/dem) for more disaster preparedness information and to access downloadable information sheets.

### **I hear that heavy rains may cause flooding. What should I do to prepare?**

- Know the meanings and effects of National Weather Service issued messages of Flood Advisory, Flash Flood Watch and Flash Flood Warning. Visit the National Weather Service on-line at <http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/> for more information and current weather advisory status. Call the National Weather Service at **808-973-4380** for recorded weather information, and monitor television and radio for the latest updates.
- Learn the safest route from your home or place of business to high ground should you have to evacuate in a hurry.
- If your area floods frequently, keep emergency materials on hand such as sandbags, plywood, plastic sheeting, and lumber.
- Stay away from areas along streams or near drainage canals/ditches. These areas can become deadly during periods of heavy rainfall.
- If your car stalls in a flooded area, abandon it as soon as possible. Floodwaters can rise rapidly and sweep a car (and its occupants) away. Many deaths have resulted from attempts to move stalled vehicles. **DO NOT** drive through flooded areas in your vehicle as parts of the road may already be washed out or the water may be much deeper than it appears. **Turn around, don't drown!**
- Consider canceling or postponing outdoor activities especially hiking in mountains and valleys. A small stream can become a raging torrent within minutes if previous rainfall has been substantial. Don't cross until the flash flood subsides.
- Heavy rains cause runoff, which attracts more sharks. Avoid swimming immediately after a heavy storm, especially in murky waters.
- If you experience a flood related emergency call **9-1-1** immediately!

## **SHELTERS**

### **Where is my emergency hurricane shelter located?**

Most public shelters are located within Hawaii public schools. You should know the location of at least two nearby shelters. Do not automatically evacuate. Specific shelter locations as well as opening times will be broadcast over TV and radio should evacuation be necessary. Call Aloha United Way at 2-1-1 for the location of your nearest shelter or go to the DEM website at [www.honolulu.gov/dem](http://www.honolulu.gov/dem) to view a list of shelters.

### **If I evacuate to a shelter what do I need to bring?**

You must bring **all** of your emergency supplies with you. This includes non-perishable foods, water, clothing, special medications, bedding and other necessary items for you and everyone in your family evacuating to a shelter. Shelters only provide you with a protected place to stay during an emergency in the event your home or area is no longer safe.

## **VISITORS**

### **I am a visitor, what should I do?**

Return to your hotel as soon as possible and check with front desk staff as to what emergency accommodations or procedures are available for you. If you are unable to return to your hotel before storm conditions arrive, public shelters when opened will accept visitors also. Listen to TV and radio for shelter locations and opening times.

## **WATCHES AND WARNINGS**

### **A Hurricane or Tropical Storm WATCH has been issued. What does that mean and what should I do?**

A Hurricane/Tropical Storm **WATCH** means that the hurricane/tropical storm conditions of high winds, wind-driven rain, and storm surge are possible in the specified area of the **WATCH**, usually within 48-hours. Think of a **WATCH** as a reminder to **PREPARE**. When a **WATCH** is issued residents should:

- Fuel your vehicle and maintain the level at full or no less than one-half.
- Prepare to protect windows and doors with plywood boards (minimum 5/8" thick), storm shutters or other types of hurricane resistant window protection.
- Check emergency food and water supplies. Maintain enough supplies to provide for the needs of everyone in your family including pets for a minimum of seven days. Store your emergency supplies in a cooler or other type of easily transported container in case you have to evacuate your place of residence.
- Ensure that you have a working portable radio, flashlight and spare batteries.
- Be sure that loose outdoor items such as garbage cans, lawn chairs and tables, garden tools, etc. are stored or secured in place.
- Check and replenish first-aid supplies, prescription and over-the-counter medications.
- Keep an extra supply of cash on-hand, the amount that you would normally spend over seven (7) days is a good planning figure.

- Prepare for the special needs of pets, elderly, infants or those dependent on electricity.

**A Hurricane or Tropical Storm WARNING has been issued. What does that mean and what should I do?**

A Hurricane/Tropical Storm **WARNING** means that the hurricane/tropical storm conditions of high winds and storm surge are possible in the specified area of the **WARNING**, usually within 36-hours. Think of a **WARNING** as an alert to TAKE ACTION. When a **WARNING** is issued residents should:

- Be prepared to evacuate if ordered to do so, especially if you live in:
  - The Coastal Evacuation Zone – Consult telephone book white pages evacuation maps or visit our web site at [www.honolulu.gov/dem](http://www.honolulu.gov/dem) and click on the Tsunami Map Viewer link. Hurricane evacuation zones are the same as those for a tsunami.
  - Flood Zones.
  - Older homes (built pre-1995) on exposed ridgelines and on mountain slopes.
  - Older “plantation” style single wall homes without foundations, regardless of where they are located.
- Complete any unfinished hurricane **WATCH** actions.
- Follow emergency instructions issued by emergency management or public safety officials.
- Notify neighbors and a family member outside of the area of your evacuation plans so you can re-establish contact after a storm.

**A Flash Flood Advisory/Watch/Warning was just broadcast. What does that mean?**

**Flood Advisory**

A Flood Advisory means nuisance flooding is occurring or imminent. A Flood Advisory may be upgraded to a Flash Flood Warning if flooding worsens and poses a threat to life and property. Closely monitor TV and radio for more information.

**Flash Flood Watch**

A Flash Flood Watch means heavy rain leading to flash flooding is possible. If you are in the area of a flash flood watch you should be prepared for heavy rains and flooding that may develop. Flash Flood Watches may be issued up to 12 hours before flash flooding is expected to begin and may last as long as 48 hours. Continue to closely monitor TV and radio for more information.

**Flash Flood Warning**

This means that flash flooding is occurring or will develop quickly somewhere within the designated area. If your area is identified in a Flash Flood Warning you must take shelter or evacuate to high ground immediately especially if you reside in a flood prone area or near streams and rivers. Closely monitor TV and radio for more information on flooded areas and public shelters that may be open for evacuees. When evacuating **DO NOT** drive through flooded areas in your vehicle as parts of the road may already be washed out or the water may be much deeper than it appears. **Turn around, don't drown!**

## WEATHER RELATED

### How can I get current weather information?

Call the National Weather Service at **808-973-4380** for recorded weather information or visit their website at [www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/](http://www.prh.noaa.gov/hnl/)

If time permits consider purchasing a NOAA weather alert radio.

NOAA Weather Alert Radios can notify you 24 hours a day to hazards in our area including severe weather, hurricanes and tropical storms and tsunami events. In addition, many of these units can activate other warning devices such as a strobe light to provide a visual warning. These radios are available from Oahu electronics and department stores.

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